

BRIEFER ARTICLES.

Difference between the common salt-wort and the Russian thistle.—Farmers' Bulletin no. 10, of the Department of Agriculture, on the Russian thistle and other weeds, has aroused some interest in the distinctive differences between the harmless saltwort *Salsola Kali* L. and the noxious Russian thistle *Salsola Kali* L., var. *tragus* DC. The former has existed on the Atlantic coast for nearly a century at least and appears to be indigenous there and also in saline localities in the Black Hills. It has never been regarded as a troublesome weed. The variety *tragus* was introduced into South Dakota from Russia about seventeen years ago and is now justly regarded as the worst weed in the northwest.

The two forms appear very much alike but it is a matter of importance that they should be distinguished.

The original description of the variety is as follows: "*β Tragus, suberecta glabra viridis, alis subbrevibus subroseis vel roseis.*"—DC. Prod. XIII. 2. 187. It is given here in full because De Candolle's Prodrômus is not as available to all botanists as one might wish. In addition to these characters the following may aid in distinguishing the variety from the species: The species *S. Kali* does not become bright red or magenta colored at maturity. The middle bract, or a bract-like leaf subtending the floral bracts, is usually much longer than the others. The calyx is dull white or slightly rose-colored and coriaceous; the wing on the back of the calyx lobes is thick and comparatively narrow, less prominent than the ascending lobe.

The variety *tragus* becomes rose-colored or bright magenta at maturity on the bracts and more or less on the branches and all parts exposed to the light. The bracts are nearly equal, or at least no one appears regularly throughout the plant to be two or three times longer than the others. The calyx is membranaceous and nearly always bright rose-colored. The wings on the back of the calyx lobes are thin and are much larger than the ascending lobes.

All of these characters vary. Otherwise there would be a specific difference. Color is of comparatively little value under different conditions of light and moisture but the characters of the calyx are reasonably constant.

The true Russian thistle, the same form which is causing so much trouble in North and South Dakota, has recently been received from Valentine, Nebraska, about seventy-five miles west of the Missouri river. It may be expected along railroads in all parts of the northwest, and care should be taken to kill it in these places before it goes to seed and becomes established.—L. H. DEWEY, *Washington, D. C.*